

## State Budget for 2000 Funds Tax Cuts For Seniors to Address Their Needs

By Senator Donald T. DiFrancesco

TRENTON — New Jersey can proudly say that no other state in the country provides as much per capita aid to its seniors, and I am proud of the \$1.4 billion contained in the fiscal year 2000 state budget to provide our senior citizens with real tax relief and with quality programs that address their needs.

This year, every property taxpayer will enjoy two new tax relief programs designed to keep more dollars in the pockets of New Jersey citizens.

First, is the New Jersey Saver Program, a \$1 billion property tax relief plan championed by Governor Whitman that will return an average of \$120 to every New Jersey homeowner this year, and an average of \$600 when fully phased-in.

The second is a new law I sponsored that will tie the level of municipal aid distributed by the state to the inflation index. This will help local officials better plan their budgets, and help prevent the cost of annual inflation from being passed on to local taxpayers.

Seniors will benefit from these major tax relief initiatives. However, the Legislature wanted to do more in the budget to provide additional savings to New Jerseyans who have worked hard their entire lives and many of whom now live on fixed incomes.

In June, I made it a priority for the Senate to pass the Retirement Income Tax Act that would double the maximum income that seniors can exempt from their income free of state income taxes. Currently, seniors 62 and over are eligible to have \$10,000 of their retirement income free of state taxes.

Scheduled to be signed into law on August 3, the measure will make \$20,000 in retirement income for married seniors tax free after a four-year phase-in period.

State taxpayers — particularly our senior citizens on fixed incomes — are already paying their fair share for education, for government programs, and for police and fire protection. We need to do something this year — in this year's budget — to give our seniors the tax relief they need and deserve.

For the most needy seniors, the state budget also includes \$24 million to fund a property tax freeze program. For seniors aged 65 and older who qualify for Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD), the program will freeze their property taxes, with the state paying for any annual increases in subsequent years.

Combined, the tax relief programs contained in the budget for seniors total nearly \$400 million. That amount includes \$8 million for the Retirement Income Tax Act, \$24 million for the senior property tax freeze, \$290 million for senior citizen homestead rebates and \$36 million for the senior municipal property tax exemption, which provides a \$250 property tax exemption per household for those 65 or older.

There is also a \$30 million program for senior citizen property taxpayers from the Property Tax Deduction, which I sponsored in 1995.

As seniors discovered when filing their taxes in April, they can now deduct their property tax bill from their state income tax liability, saving significant dollars.

In addition to these tax relief initiatives, \$1 billion will be spent to support a variety of existing senior programs, such as PAAD, Community Care, Alzheimer's Disease Program, Medical Day Care Services, Respite Care for the Elderly, Home Delivered Meals, Senior Transportation Services and a new series of initiatives for elder care.

Today, our seniors want and deserve to enjoy their retirement years in the great state that they helped to build. The fiscal year 2000 budget reflects the Legislature's commitment to giving senior citizens the tax relief and special programs to do just that.



**VOLUNTEERISM COUNTS...** Congressman Bob Franks (R-7th) awards Marie Leppert of Scotch Plains a certificate of appreciation during the Sixth Annual Seventh Congressional District Volunteer of the Year ceremony. In observance of National Volunteers Week, Congressman Franks recognized more than 60 individuals and organizations from throughout Central New Jersey for their hard work and dedication within the community.

## Mayor Connelly to Participate In Walk to Aid Breast Cancer

FANWOOD — Fanwood Mayor Maryanne S. Connelly is joining 2,000 individuals for the Avon Breast Cancer 3-Day and will walk 60 miles over three days to raise funds that will help promote breast cancer education and early detection services.

The event will start in Bear Mountain, N.Y. on Friday, August 27, and will end in Manhattan on Sunday, August 29. Participants will walk an average of 20 miles a day, traveling at their own pace.

Mayor Connelly has decided to walk in the 3-Day because, "I know so many people that have been touched by breast cancer. My grandmother died from it when my mother was a young child. My aunt was diagnosed and treated at age 78. I count five close friends who are undergoing treatment and one friend who didn't make it. This is why I've made a commitment to a very special and powerful event in the fight against breast cancer. Early detection may have saved my grandmother, we will never know but there are present and

future grandmothers that can benefit from this effort."

In order to participate, each walker must raise \$1,800 and the proceeds will support breast health programs in the metropolitan area and throughout the U.S.

Mayor Connelly has been following a rigorous training program which began in April. She and her walking partner, Mary Ann Corcoran of Westfield, started by doing one to two walks per week covering six to eight miles.

## Westfield Library Plans Internet Training Class

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Memorial Library will hold a class on Internet searching techniques on Tuesday, August 17, from 9:30 to 10:45 a.m.

This basic course for beginners is oriented toward using the Internet as a tool for research and browsing. It also includes an introduction to the EBSCO magazine index. However, it does not include use of e-mail, newsgroups or listservers.

Some experience with a computer mouse is a prerequisite. If mouse experience is needed, please come to the library prior to the day of class for instruction and practice.

In person or telephone registration begins on Monday, August 9, at the Circulation Desk. The library is located at 550 East Broad Street. A valid Westfield Library card is required.

For more information, please call (908) 789-4090. Class size is limited to eight individuals.

## Toastmasters Plan Meeting Tonight

WESTFIELD — The Toastmasters of Westfield will meet tonight, Thursday, August 5, from 7:45 to 9:30 p.m., at Sunrise Assisted Living of Westfield.

The group meets the first, second and fourth Thursday of each month to help individuals improve their public speaking and leadership skills.

Anne Baker of Westfield will be this evening's Toastmaster. Debi Young of Westfield will give the Opener and the Topics Master will be Jack Planne of Cranford. Speakers will be Ed Cruikshank of Westfield, Steve Bacque of Linden and Mary Polituro of Westfield.

Evaluators will be Debbie Krajcik of Cranford, Fontaine Gatti of Mountainside and Noel Crawford of Mountainside. The Timer will be Karen Sciaraffa of Plainfield with Mark Hauptman of Fanwood filling the role of Grammarian. The "Ah" Counter will be Sandy Aptecker of Mountainside.

## Scotch Plains Lions Club Installs New Officers

SCOTCH PLAINS — The installation of officers meeting of the Scotch Plains Lions Club was held recently. Officers were installed by Past Vice District Governor Norman Bendel.

For 1999-2000 officers will be President-Lawrence Thompson; Vice Presidents Edna Kirshenbaum, Elmer Terry and Adam Rothenberg; Secretary Barbara Anilo; Assistant Secretary Arthur Fowler; Treasurer Donald Wussler; Assistant Treasurer Charles Monroe; Tail Twister Norman Bendel; Lion Tamer Michael Solomon and Director Elmer Terry. Immediate Past President Norman Bendel was presented with a Lions jacket by the club. Lions International presented Arthur Fowler with a 50th Year Charter Monarch Certificate.

In June, the club celebrated its 50th year Anniversary at Snuffy's Pantagis Renaissance. Guests of honor were Senate President Donald T. DiFrancesco, Scotch Plains Mayor Geri Samuel, Lions International Director Stanley Grossman and Li-

## NEWS FROM WASHINGTON

Seventh Congressional District

## Taxpayers Deserve to Share in Surplus By Receiving Break From Government

By Congressman Bob Franks

The budget was not created in Washington; it comes from the taxes paid by hardworking men and women who have created our thriving economy. Taxpayers deserve to share in our economic success by receiving a tax break from the federal government.

If all of the surplus money were left in Washington, D.C., politicians would find a way to spend it. Your tax dollars would wind up going to pay for even bigger, more costly government programs.

I'd rather put the money in the pockets of America's families than in the hands of government bureaucrats.

Despite good economic times, taxes continue to overwhelm many American families. All taxes - federal, state

and local - consume 38 percent of the average family's income. That's more than a family spends on food, clothing and shelter combined. And the average taxpayer works from January 1 to May 10 just to pay their taxes.

We need to put more money in the hands of taxpayers so they can move ahead and save for the future. The personal savings rate last month dropped to its lowest level since the Depression. High taxes are preventing families from saving for the future — for their retirement and for their kids' college education.

The Financial Freedom Act of 1999, which passed the House on July 22 with my support, will provide a tax cut to every American, regardless of their incomes. In fact, more than half the tax relief provided in this legislation will go to cutting income taxes for every individual and every family.

For a family with an annual income of \$55,700, that amounts to a reduction in their taxes of \$1,000. A single person earning \$25,000 would save \$380. A senior with an annual income of \$30,000 would save \$510.

At issue is not only high taxes, but the fact that the tax system is fundamentally unfair to families. More than 21 million Americans pay higher taxes every year simply because they are married. Our tax system should encourage marriage, not penalize it.

The Financial Freedom Act begins the process of correcting the inequity. The average married couple will save \$243 in taxes under the bill.

Finally, we can keep our commitment to save Social Security and Medicare and still provide substantial tax relief to families. For every one dollar in tax relief over the next five years, we are setting aside \$3 to strengthen Social Security and Medicare to guarantee a secure retirement for today's seniors and future retirees.

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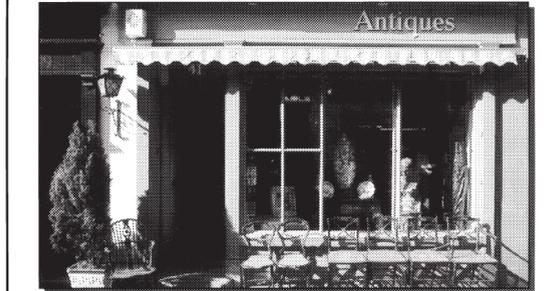
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